WHIRRAKEE

June 2015

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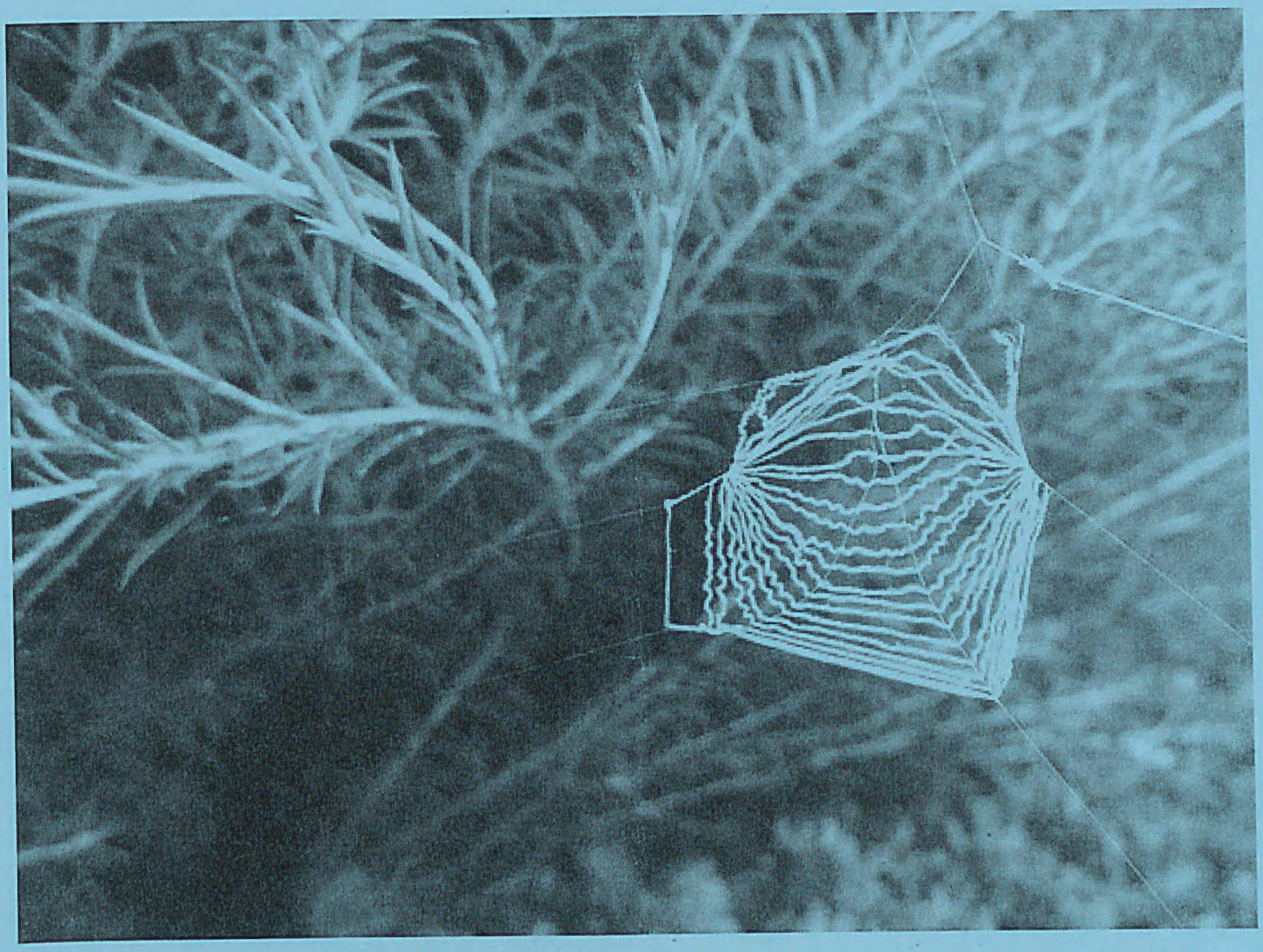

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Office Bearers for 2014 - 2015

President	*vacant*		
Vice President	Jenny Shield	e-mail: jennyshield66@gmail.com	5441 4029
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer		0409 162 627
Treasurer	Ben Goonan		

Positions delegated by the Committee

Minute Secretary	*vacant*		
Excursion organiser	John Lindner		5448 3406
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan		
Librarian	Diana Collier & Maryann Hill		5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Jan Orr		
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens	e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	*vacant*		
Website coordinator/Webmaster	Ben Goonan		

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Alistair White, Kerrie Norris, Diana Collier, Devi Shanty, Simon Hay, John McCallum

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 36, No. 5, June 2015
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Short notices		3
Vale Leila Ramsey	Matt Comer/ Valda Dedman	3
Vale Peter Ellis	Rob Moors	5
Colour photos	various contributors	4-7
June excursion details	John Lindner	8
May Excursion report	John Lindner	8

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.

Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note

After talking up the amazing memory of Peter Ellis in my last editorial, he has suddenly left us with these memories of him. Peter died suddenly and will be very much missed by all who knew him. Another, less well-known member also died recently. Both club members are remembered in this edition. Since Peter Ellis was unable to give his advertised talk last month, we had the June talk brought forward and saw a film of the first 40 years of the club in digitised format. Getting this organised was a labour of love by Rob and Cynthia Watkins, and I am particularly grateful that Peter was there to see it. Those of you who missed the film will get another chance, I am sure. Ben has arranged another speaker for this month, and the topic will be a treat.

Front page photograph: The artful construction of a web-casting spider, taken by Glenise Moors This photo was taken at Bairnsdale in Glenise's son's garden on 6/5/2015. She noticed the tiny 'glacier-blue' web suspended between the bushes but couldn't find any spider, only a dried skin. Later that night, Glenise took a quick flash photo (in the rain) of the spider attending her web and was surprised by her size compared to the web. It seems they usually hold onto the web and put it over their prey rather than throw it (page 4 has the photos in colour and some more information).

Short Notices

Tang Tang Swamp Community workshop
For those who are interested in the Tang Tang Swamp, a community meeting has been organized by the NCCMA to identify the ecological, social and economic values, as well as provide input into future management. The meeting/workshop is on June 17, between 10am and 3pm at the Dingee Pub in Dingee.
RSVP is by June 3, but you could try registering late or just contribute something in writing.
Please contact Bree Bisset on 54401824 or via e-mail bree.bisset@nccma.vic.gov.au

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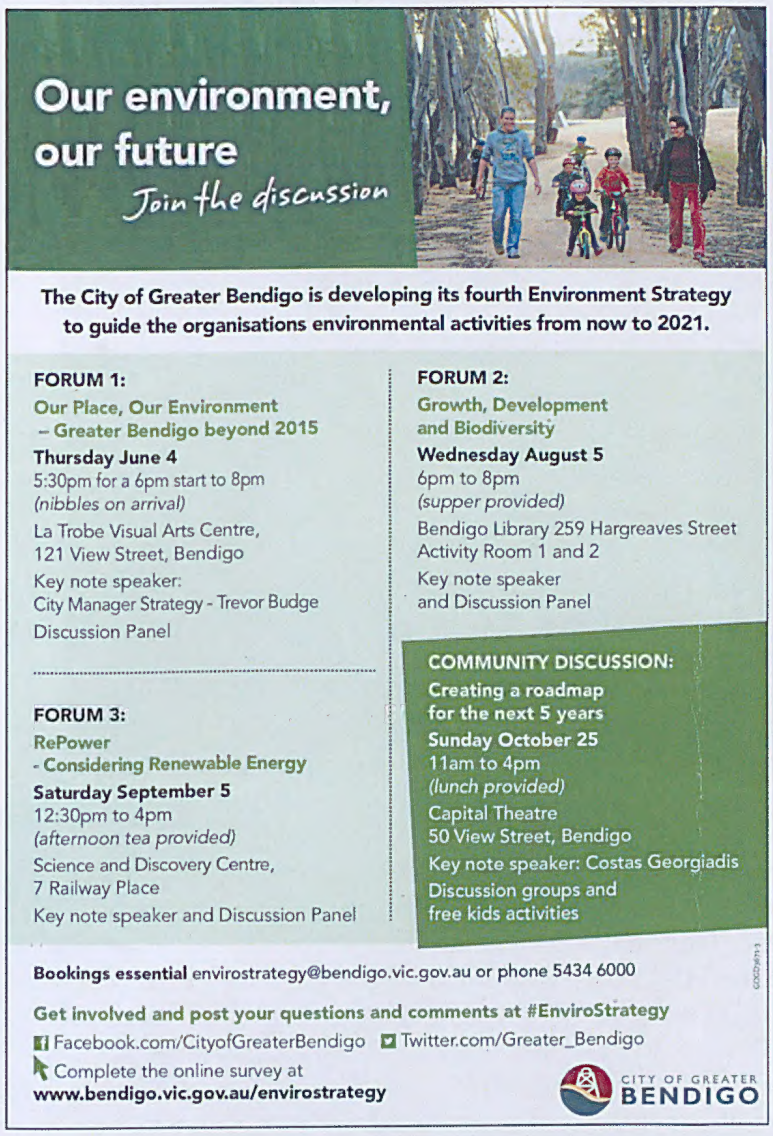
Providing a cheery aspect to club meetings
by Diana Collier
What a friendly gesture – and a generous one by Amber! A few years ago, after the talk at the monthly Wednesday evening meetings, we would have chats over a cuppa and 'small nibbles' or such, which various members contributed towards by bringing a 'plate' or leaving $1.00 to help cover costs (spent by the Club). This just faded out.... BUT over the last couple of meetings, Amber has so thought -fully taken it upon herself - perhaps with the help of a couple of friends, to organise the 'Cuppa" and delicious home-made nibbly things. I would like to suggest, encourage, that we each once again bring a 'plate"' and share the club team spirit in this way.

Correction to observation reported by Bill Holsworth (May *Whirrakee*)
Re: The apparent sighting of a pygmy possum on April 3 in the Kennington area…
After a careful study of the photographs of the animals on a fruit tree, the expert at the Rylah Wildlilfe Research Institute in Heidelburg has concluded that they are house mice.

Nature Abstracted…an exhibition by Bronwyn Silver This looks like a terrific show about mosses and lichens from the box-ironbark forest… It is on at the Falkner Gallery in Castlemaine until June 21.

Vale Leila Ramsay
by Valda Dedman/via Matt Comer
Although probably not known to many of us, Leila Ramsay was a member of our club who resided at Strath-Haven Bendigo and enjoyed receiving *Whirrakee*. She was a member of the Geelong Field Naturalists Club before moving to Bendigo to be closer to family. Some members of our club knew Leila through the SEANA camps. She passed away in March and the committee obtained permission to re-print the following tribute from the *Geelong Naturalist*, written by Valda Dedman:
Leila Ramsay was a great mentor to me. She wanted to share her botanical knowledge and I was a willing, if not very good, pupil. We would go to Jerringot and collect samples and then she would show me how to dry them and then mount them to create our own herbarium. Later, when I was a tutor in natural history for U3A, she would accompany the class on field trips so that I could take advantage of her expertise in identifying the plants we found.
I first met Leila when she was a health centre nurse at Highton and she alerted me to take my baby to the doctor, which later led to a heart operation, which saved her life. For that I am eternally grateful. I claim to have introduced Leila to the Geelong Field Naturalists Club, after I had given a talk to our Old Collegians, for we both went to the same school.
She became an enthusiastic member of our club. She joined the committee and took on the duties of excursion secretary and librarian. She also wrote several articles for the *Naturalist*. However botany was her first love. There is plenty of evidence of this in my 'Out and About' in the March 2015 *Geelong Naturalist*. This is my enduring tribute to her. I could not have written that article without her notebooks and lists.
She left Geelong for Bendigo to be closer to family but remained a member of the GFNC. She enjoyed reading the *Naturalist* and had it read aloud to her when she could no longer decipher the small print.
Farewell, Leila, after 103 years of a life well lived.

You might consider getting involved in shaping the future of our city?

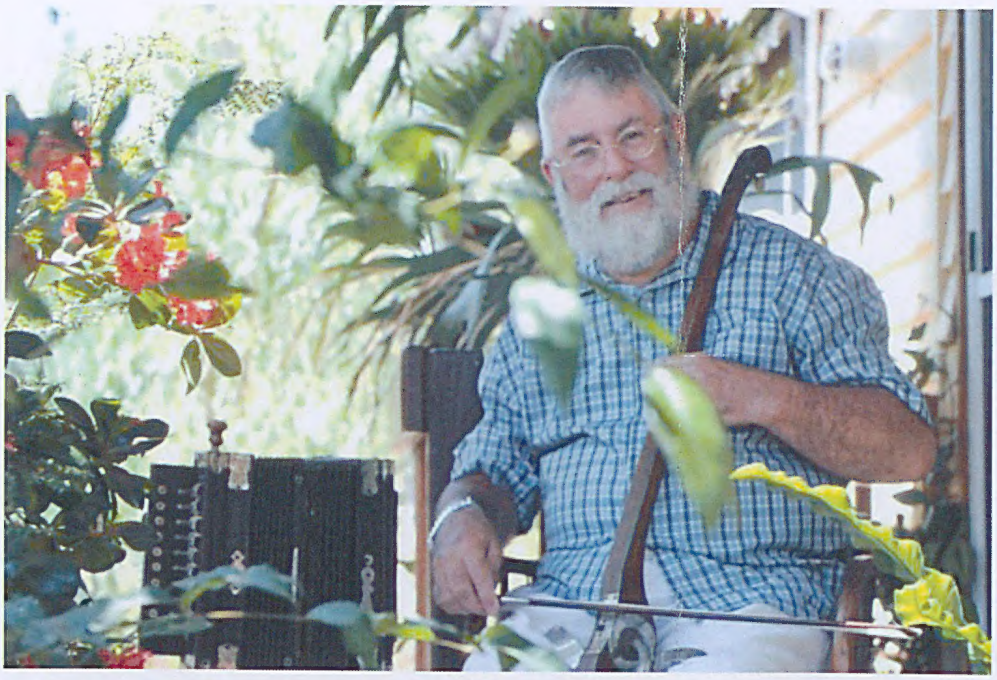


The webcasting spider from the front page
Photographed by Glenise Moors

This image was taken quickly just after midnight in drizzling rain. The web still appears to be attached to the English Box hedge and the shrub behind it. It is a net-casting spider, *Deinopis* sp.
Imagine my surprise when I found such a big spider owned the web!

The photo below was taken during the daytime and showed as a 'glacier blue' rectangle about 30mm long with single lines from corners holding the edges taut but the inner parts were slack and wrinkled. It was quite windy when I took this photo. There is more information about these interesting spiders here:

http://australianmuseum.net.au/net-casting-spiders and an amazing youtube video, which shows the spider in action:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_peM31m5HFA



This picture appeared in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on January 25, 2012, in an article by Hannah Knight, when Peter Ellis was awarded the OAM (Photo: Matt Kimpton)

Vale Peter Ellis

The following is Rob Moor's eulogy, presented at Peter's Funeral on May 25

When I first met Peter in the mid '60s, he was a young man studying chemistry at Bendigo Technical College. He was quiet but enthusiastic. He had a passion for the bush, which was encouraged by Redvers Eddy, "Strappo", one of our lecturers. Red was an avid bird observer and pioneering nature photographer and Peter was determined to emulate him in his botanical pursuits. Some weekends, Peter led fellow students Bruce Chisholm and Jim Chan on trips to local bushland, on bicycles. When Bruce got a car and Glenise and I joined the group, these trips became further afield ....

I believe Red Eddy nominated Peter for membership of Bendigo Field Naturalists Club and it wasn't long before Peter was a member of the committee and then President, a young man among older men, some of whom wore Tam o' Shanters to outings. Peter happily joined this fashion!! Peter was Secretary for many years and was a member of the team producing the Club Magazine.

There was a move within the Club to have the Whipstick given conservation status and Peter took on this cause with a passion. Frank Robbins, "Doc", was surveying and documenting the status of Whipstick native vegetation and geology. Peter assisted in this, travelling many miles in Doc's FJ Holden and where this was not possible, on foot. Peter purchased the FJ as his first car and lovingly maintained it until relatively recently, travelling thousands of miles in pursuit of nature and bush music.

Peter was instrumental in the preparation of a submission to have the Whipstick preserved. A small group of us, led by Peter and Doc travelled to Melbourne in the FJ and presented the submission personally to the Premier, Rupert Hamer. The document was illustrated with Peter's photographs of the Whipstick in full bloom and we had a favourable response.

Other notable conservation successes driven by Peter were Boyd Street, now Saloman Gully Flora Reserve, which involved years of confrontation with the City Council and Quarry Hill Golf Club and Jackass Flat, which was proposed for the site of Dai Gum San.

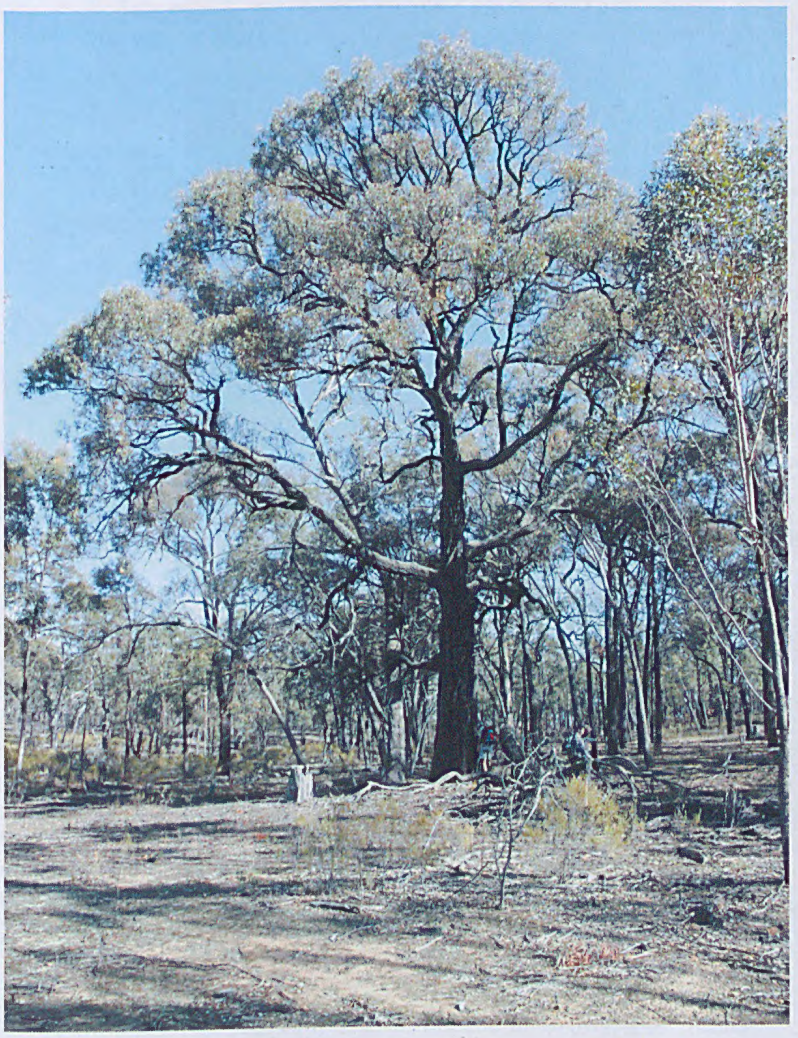
He was not always successful! A deputation to Daryl McClure, the local Member, to obtain funds to buy lands to add to the Whipstick was rejected. Peter was determined to fill in the gaps on the map. He persevered like a dog with a bone and we now have the Whipstick preserved for posterity in no small part due to Peter's efforts. He was awarded Life Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club.

Peter helped Bob Allen and Tom Patullo set out nature trails on One Tree Hill with plants labelled with their common and botanical names. Peter liked a joke!! A bush hung with tea bags said Ti-tree and another with beer cans, *Cano grogus*. Peter liked "real" billy tea with a sprig of boronia where available and swung over in a circle to settle the leaves.

...continued on page 10

May club excursion to Bung Bong to see Red Ironbarks and other big remnant trees
(Photographer John McCallum) For article see page 8.

Above: excursion participants look pretty happy…note the large base of the Red Ironbark behind them



Left: One of the large Red Ironbarks on the property, mentioned in the article on page 8

Below: Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest in an old Grey Box

Kamarooka birds Photographer: Michael Angove

Purple-gaped Honeyeater, May 25

White-eared Honeyeater, May 18

Yellow-faced Honeyeater, May 17

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, May 11

White-fronted Honeyeater, May 17

Jacky Winter, May 24

Fungi Excursion, Sunday June 14

Location Sanatorium Lake, Mount Macedon

Leader Joy Clusker and others

Meeting Point BFNC clubrooms

Departure Time 8.30 am

Return Time Probably between 4.00 and 5.00 pm.

Mode of Travel Members' cars with car-pooling to minimize vehicles. Passengers will be asked to contribute towards the cost of fuel

Car Travel Details

1. Golden Square, Harcourt, Kyneton, Woodend, Macedon. This is about 90 km.

2. Directions from south of Woodend: leave the freeway at Black Forest Drive, and at 0.75 km turn in to Nursery Road, which will take you in to the village of Macedon (a further 1.0 km).

3. Directions from Macedon village: from the main street (Smith Street), proceed 1.75 km along Honour Avenue to Mount Macedon Road. Turn left and proceed for about 6.5 km to the turnoff to the right to Lions Head Road and Barringo Road. A short distance along Lions Head Road, stop at Day's Picnic Ground.

Map A map of sections 2. and 3. above will be provided.

Walking From Day's Picnic Ground, we will walk about 1.0 km to Sanatorium Lake.

Activities Identification and photography Lunch at the picnic ground or the lake.

Weather The excursion will not be cancelled if it is merely showering or cold. We will only cancel if it is absolutely bucketing down.

What To Bring Mount Macedon is a much cooler and wetter area than Bendigo. Fungi love rain and coolness, and look their best in those conditions. So please come well prepared.

- Clothing – warm stuff in layers, with beanie and gloves.
- Waterproofs – rain jacket and overpants if possible.
- Boots.
- Food – morning and afternoon tea, lunch, hot drinks in thermos.
- Seat – bring a folding chair or foam mat.
- Observing and recording fungi – camera, tripod, field guides, dental mirror to examine the hidden parts of fungi more easily, note book, plastic sheet to lie on the ground, when taking photos
- Umbrella - can be handy if there are showers.
- Salt – this can be handy to remove the odd leech.
- Backpack for your gear.

Note

In many previous years, we have gone to Babbington Road and Bullarto Reservoir near Daylesford. Both Joy and Matt Comer have been to Sanatorium Lake recently, and so we decided on a change of venue. The travel distance is only about 20 km more.

Excursion Report Bung Bong

by John Lindner

Title Big Red Ironbarks (*Eucalyptus siderroxylon*) and other large remnant eucalypts

Date Sunday 17 May 2015, full day

Location 50 hectare block of woodland belonging to Lindy Lumsden, located at Bung Bong west of Maryborough. Lindy very kindly allowed us access without being present her self.

Participants (total 18, see photo on page 6)
Anne Bridley, Jane Cleary, Matt Comer, Simon Hay, Bill Holsworth, Carol Holsworth, John Lindner, Kate Lindner, John McCallum, Meg McCallum, Jessica Milroy, John Robinson, Jenny Shield, Alan Spence, Karen Thomas, Cynthia Watkins, Rob Watkins, Alistair White

Weather Fine and sunny

Activities Basically, we did a circular walk within the fenced confines of the block, with a "tail" comprising the section in and out to the road. The total distance was about 4.5 kilometres, but it was done at a fairly relaxed pace. We stopped at intervals at various focal locations where there were big trees and interesting topics associated with them.

On completing the walk, we indulged in a slap-up afternoon tea back at the cars. This was our homage to 70 years of the club's existence, where afternoon tea with sandwiches and cake was pivotal, and needless to say a tea-bag free zone.

The significance of this area

So what exactly is the attraction of these big trees? First, there are very few trees of such size remaining in the box-ironbark forests. We visited a few in the Wellsford State Forest excursion on 26 April, but mostly these are in poorer condition. Secondly, they are living things, which are very beautiful and impressive, each one distinctive in its own way.

They have survived for centuries through drought, fire and storm. Thirdly, their age, form and spacing can give us an idea what some areas of the box-ironbark woodland may have looked like when the first gold-miners arrived. That is, there were fewer mature trees and they were more widely spaced, with perhaps a sparser understory layer. However, this is at best only a vague idea – it is almost impossible to reconstruct what that "original" forest looked like. By contrast, today's forests have many more trees, smaller and closer together, and you can still find the stumps of the grand old trees which have been cut down. It is certainly a privilege to spend time in such an area as Bung Bong.

The big trees

Throughout the block, which is connected to the forest on three sides, there are good stands of eucalypt species typical of box-ironbark forest:

Red Ironbark	RIB	*E. sideroxylon*
Grey Box	GB	*E. microcarpa*
Red Stringybark	RSB	*E.macrorhyncha*

There are a few scattered specimens of:

Yellow Gum	YG	*E. leucoxylon*
Red Box	RB	*E. polyanthemos*

The aspect which we came particularly to investigate was the very big, old eucalypts, whose age is of the order of 200 to 400 years. Within the block, these special trees only exist in quite small patches, mainly located to the north-west of the centre, on a ridge top and two deeper valleys nearby. In these locations, the Red Ironbark, are characterized by the following features:

•Very thick trunks, well over a metre in diameter.

•Quite a few are leaning to one side.

•Very thick, furrowed bark, with some interesting variations in texture between trees.

•Very wide canopies, sometimes almost as wide as the tree is tall.

•However the canopy densities (leaf cover) are quite thin due to the loss of major branches and the age of the trees.

•A lot of variation in the number of upper branches, their thickness and shape.

•Huge amount of dead wood on the ground, coming from the progressive shedding of upper branches due to storm damage and decay.

•Numerous hollow branches.

Observations en route

Here is a selection of the locations at which we stopped on the walk.

•RIB with a lot of charcoal on the trunks, along the track into the entry gate. It is possible that these originated from the Maryborough fire of January 1985, since ironbarks don't shed their bark. That fire did decimate Bung Bong further west.

•RIB with one of its very large paired trunks fallen due to poor attachment to its twin at the base. This had only happened recently.

•RIB on track in to the caravan. Its bark was particularly thick and ropey.

•A large pile of bark stripped from felled RIB, which we thought might have been moved to that spot for stripping.

•Large Wedge-tailed Eagle nest in a very tall GB, and a second one close by (photo on pg6)

•An RIB with a line of burls going up the trunk, a fairly unusual thing to see.

•An RIB with a particularly big hump or mound at its base, produced by the growth of the wood in the trunks and roots, but exaggerated by the tree leaning to one side and levering up the soil and rocks.

•A zone of very thick, close-together GB saplings. They looked as if they had all germinated at the same time when conditions were favourable.

•A possible hybrid tree between RIB and RB, having rough, vertically furrowed bark at the base (RIB) and a canopy of rounded leaves (RB).

•An RIB which had completely lost its entire upper trunk and branches at quite a low

height, but had regrown a new canopy of very healthy, fresh-looking leaves on smaller branches.
•A large GB with a very cavernous hollow inside its base.
•Another large GB with a very bulbous base, but with only a skeletal canopy.
•An area of Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*), mostly comprising scraggly seedling trees, but with a couple of larger trees mixed in. This species has separate male (pollen producing) and female (cone bearing) trees.
•A large YG with beautifully striped bark.
•A large GB whose trunk had failed due to rot and shed half of its bulk, again only recently.

Anne Bridley compiled a bird and plant list. Two notable birds recorded were Crested Bellbird (heard) and Eastern Spinebill (foraging in RIB). John McCallum took the images. I was fully preoccupied keeping the chickens together. I must have succeeded – nobody got lost or left behind. That was a relief.
Editor's note: The list of Birds and plants list will appear at a later date…

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continued from page 6…

Field Naturalist Clubs from the western part of the state met together at camp-outs twice a year. Peter felt that these should extend to cover the whole state, so Peter, Alex Fisher from Mid-Murray, and I visited clubs in the east to gain support. At Bairnsdale, club members suggested that rather than travel back through Melbourne we go over the Dargo High Plains. Peter enthusiastically embraced this suggestion to see new country. After many miles we ran into an impassable snow drift and we had to back-track, arriving home at 3 am. All was not lost, the Victorian FNC Assoc. was formed and has now expanded to become SEANA which also includes parts of SA and NSW.
Peter enjoyed camping but enjoyed his creature comforts too. He had a kerosene heater in his 12 x 12 tent! I remember, I think it was Bob Allen, sticking his head into the tent and shouting out, " He's sleeping in a bloody blast furnace?" Peter loved to entertain us around the camp fire with his mouth organ, spoons and tin whistle. Was this the start of his musical career?

Peter developed an interest in the outback. Three of us travelled in my car to Central Australia before there were formed roads. He was enthralled by the wildflowers, taking many photos. Unfortunately, he developed a sudden interest in geology and started to collect rock samples until I had to stop him. The car wasn't going to get home!!!
A later trip included him crossing the Simpson Desert in Maurie Stone's Landrover along with a group of other Bendigo Nats.
Typical kit for Pete on early excursions, as well as his Tam o' Shanter, was a rectangular wicker basket with thermos, lunch, morning and afternoon tea, a brickies trowel and a bundle of newspapers. He had a precise technique for 'liberating' small native plants from the bush to be 'rehabilitated' in his garden.
His scientific bent extended to his very successful methods of propagating cuttings. He had a magnificent native garden. He propagated Whipstick Creeping Boobialla which had become extinct in the wild and organised replanting in its original habitat.
Peter had a passion for nature and everything he embraced. Peter was generous with his knowledge. We used to have a specimen table at meetings. Members brought small sprigs of plants for identification and display. Peter arrived with armfuls!!
He had a great drive and sense of humour and was a wonderful friend. I miss him.

Preview of speakers for the next months:
July: Mr. Andrew Skeoch: 'The Biophony: The evolution of sound in the natural world'
August: Mr. Gerry Gill: 'An evaluation of Aboriginal landscape management practices viewed from the Anthropocene'

(for pre-view of **planned club excursions**, see back page and the April Whirrakee

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday June 10 7.30pm
Our speaker for this month is Mr. Steve Williams, from the Entomological Society of Victoria. Steve will be talking about 'Box-Ironbark Lepidopteran Ecology'.

Club Excursions
Sunday June 14 **Fungi** (see page 8 for detail)

Sunday July 12 **Geology Excursion Advance Notice**
Theme: Volcanic rocks and landforms, with maximum 13 stops
Location: Castlemaine to Daylesford
Date: Sunday 12 July 2015
Hours: 8.30 am to 5.00 pm
Leader: Eric Wilkinson
Transport: 21 seat bus with driver
Bookings: You will need to book a place. Seats will be allocated in order of booking notification. Telephone John on 5448 3406 (please leave a message and contact details if no answer), or email jwl.bendigo@gmail.com
Cost: The club will subsidise the full cost of the trip. $20 .00 payable to John at the June or July meetings.

Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities will continue in 2015, so look out for announcements or check out their website.
Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall. Next meeting: 16th of June

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Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of the month at 1pm the Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall

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South-East Australian Naturalists Network (SEANA)
The spring camp will be hosted by the Donald FNC. The dates are Friday 25 to Sunday 27 September. *Book early as there is another function in town.* For further information check the May Whirrakee.
Donald History and Natural History Group, PO Box 111, Donald, Vic 3480
Email dhgnhg@gjr.net.au

Australian Naturalists Network
The ANN Get-Together for 2016 (ANN16) will be held in Western Australia and hosted by the WA Naturalists' Club. The
ANN16 will consist of the Get-Together but we will also be organising two pre-ANN tours and one post-ANN tour. To help
us with the planning for these events we are requesting expression of interest from your members. We are looking forward to hearing back from all of you.
Please contact the ANN 2016 Committee and the secretary Margaret Larke by email at ANN16@wanaturalists.org.au; mlarke@iinet.net.au by 1 August 2015 for more information and forms to let us know if you are interested in attending the ANN 2016

Friends of Box Ironbark Forests Bushwalks 21June15. Goughs Range ≈ 5 km
A little visited but interesting and attractive bush land with great views along the way.
If the planned management burn is severe we may have to reschedule the walk elsewhere.
Leader: Bernard Slattery 03 5470 5161